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ABSTRACT

This document summarizes annual reports of two organizations providing specialized education, training, and work experience to targeted youth who have not been effectively served by the current education system in Minnesota. The City, Inc., in Minneapolis, and the Bi-County Community Action Council, Inc. (BI-CAP) in Bemidji, provided programs for youth between the ages of 16 and 21 years who were either out of school or enrolled in school but in danger of dropping out. The City, Inc., is a non-profit social service agency that, in partnership with Project Pride for Living, developed a model program of youth employment and training. The program, "Pride in the City," focuses on furthering employment for at-risk youth and providing affordable housing for low-income or homeless citizens. The seven Native American, one Asian American, and two European American Pride in the City participants earned academic credit while working in house renovation. The BI-CAP program includes classroom education and work experience for dropouts or those who are at risk of dropping out. Work experience includes exploring the world of work during 4 hours weekly of vocational instruction and 16 hours of work with a focus on job readiness skills. Job development and work sites support expansion of residential units. The 32 BI-CAP participants completed renovation or construction of 5 houses. Recommendations for future programs rely on the successes of these initiatives. (SLD)

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A Report to the Legislature on Youth, Employment and Housing Program

Date Submitted
February 8, 1991

Submitted
by

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A summarization of annual reports submitted by The CITY, Inc. and BI-CAP INC. organizations which administered Youth Employment and Housing Programs.

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Youth Employment and Housing Program

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1991

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BACKGROUND

The 1989 legislature granted $100,000 the first year and $100,000 the second year for demonstration grants under the youth employment and housing program to eligible organizations as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 268.361, subdivision 4. $75,000 each year is for a grant to an eligible organization in the City of Bemidji and $25,000 each year is for a grant to an eligible organization in the City of Minneapolis.

The purpose of this program is to provide specialized education/ training and work experience services to targeted youth who have not been effectively served by the current education system. The programs are to include a work experience component with work projects that result in the rehabilitation or construction of residential units for the homeless.

"Targeted youth" means persons who are at least 16 years of age but not older than 21 years of age and are part of one of the following groups:

(1) persons who are not attending any school and have not received a secondary school diploma or its equivalent; or

(2) persons currently enrolled in a traditional or alternative school setting or a GED program and in the opinion of an official of the school, are in danger of dropping out.

The program design contains an education component which offers the targeted youth the opportunity to be enrolled in a traditional, alternative, or GED educational program. All enrolled youth must work toward the completion of their high school diploma or literacy advancement.

The organizations participating in the Youth Employment and Training grant program are The City, Inc. (Minneapolis) and Bi-County Community Action Council, Inc. (Bemidji).

THE CITY, INC.

The City, Inc. is a non-profit social service agency located between two inner-city Minneapolis neighborhoods, Phillips and Powderhorn, which provides a variety of services to inner-city adolescents and their families. In addition the agency provides support and social services programs such as individual, group and family therapy, legal advocacy and recreational and drop-in center programming, after-care and day treatment programs, a group home for girls, on-site day care and parenting services and a variety of other community outreach efforts. The City, Inc. school offers educational programming to Minneapolis junior and senior high school students who have suffered repeated failure experiences.

The City, Inc. targets students who have dropped out of the public school system, are expelled or significantly behind their age cohorts in credits or academic grade level, or are returning to the community from a correctional facility. During the 1989-90 school year with a total enrollment of 280 students, 80% of the school population were minority, 72% had criminal justice system involvement, 87% lived in a single parent household or independently, and 38 female students were mothers or pregnant. 100% of students were at risk of not completing a high school education due to a dysfunctional family, unemployment, lack of basic skills, low self-esteem, participation in gang activities, drug abuse, too-early pregnancy or other problems associated with people living in poverty.

The City, Inc., in partnership with Project for Pride in Living (PPL), developed a model program of youth employment and training titled, "Pride in the City", with the objectives of furthering the employment prospects of at-risk youth, and to provide affordable housing for low-income or homeless citizens.

"Pride in the City" renovates homes in the Phillips and Powderhorn neighborhoods. PPL acquires housing property and provides management of the developed property. PPL subcontracts with The City, Inc. to provide demolition/reconstruction of the property. The City school students provides labor under the supervision of a journeyman carpenter.

"Pride in the City" provides students opportunities to: gain work experience in house renovation; gain work experience and job readiness skills; be enrolled in a job seeking/job keeping course; and to be assisted in job placement and career decision-making. All opportunities are provided within the framework of continuing academic course work leading to a high school diploma.

"Pride in the City" goals for each student participating in youth employment and training program are:

to progress program participants toward high school graduation,

to increase employability of program participants, and

to facilitate job placement of program participants.

Objectives:

60% of the participants will earn a minimum of 2 hexmesters credits in academic coursework as rated by teachers.

63% (5 of 8) earned minimum 2 academic credits.

60% of the participants will earn one elective credit in a course in job keeping/job seeking skills as rated by the employment coordinator.

71% (5 of 7) earned minimum 2 work experience credits.

75% of the participants earning credits in the job keeping/job seeking course will be employed within one month of completion of the course.

This objective will be reported at year end of the program.

EDUCATION

Each participant is enrolled in The City School. The school is an accredited and comprehensive alternative high school program, focusing on basic skill acquisition with a problem-solving emphasis. The teacher/student ratio is 1:12 senior high and 1:10 junior high which allows for individualized educational planning necessary for helping students accustomed to failure overcome barriers to school success. Students are enrolled in classes for a minimum of 5 hours daily, earning Minneapolis Public School credit pursuant of a high school diploma.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Under the supervision of a journeyman carpenter, students gain both a basic understanding of physical structures and their functions as related to housing. They develop skills in working with tools and performing job junctions related to the demolition/renovation of houses. The journeyman carpenter functions both as "teacher", introducing students to tools and their use, parts of the house and their function, how to read a blueprint, how to measure, how to apply mathematics, and job "supervisor", reinforcing critical job behaviors and attitudes such as being on time, following directions, working cooperatively, being prepared, and working safely.

JOB READINESS SKILLS

Students in "Pride in the City", while not necessarily training to become carpenters, are gaining valuable work experience that will prepare them to be successful in whatever career field they may choose. Learning to be to work on time, to be prepared, to follow directions, to work cooperatively, to work safely are processes that will enable students to be successful at any job. Additionally, for many students, the opportunity to observe and develop relationships with people who are successful at working and who take pride in a job well done is a motivating factor in these students.

BI-COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL, INC. (BI-CAP)

BI-CAP, INC. is a private non-profit corporation organized under the Minnesota Non-profit Corporations Act. The area served by the agency comprises the counties of Beltrami and Cass. The board of directors consists of representatives from the public sector, low-income sector, and the private sector. Bi-CAP was organized to plan, administer and carry out programs under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and is instrumental in carrying out a synergistic approach in assisting the low-income citizens of Beltrami and Cass Counties in meeting their health, education, economic and self-esteem needs.

EDUCATION

Each student enrolled in the Alternative Education centers spends 3-4 hours each day in the classroom receiving individualized instruction in the basics, progressing at that rate which best meets his/her needs. The student/teacher ratio of 1:5 is maintained with an aid or student teacher for every 2 teachers. Academic credits are earned at the traditional rate of one credit for every 120 clock hours of instruction or through the successful completion of curriculum packages.

An additional 4 hours each day are spent participating in a work experience component. Of the 20 hours each week, 4 are spent exploring the world of work, while the remaining 16 hours are spent on the job. All students are placed in jobs that results in the expansion of residential units for the homeless or very low income.

Enrollment criteria are as follows:

1. Target age - high school drop out for at least 30 days.

2. Designated high risk student in the opinion of a high school official.
    a. one year grade level behind functional level.
    b. discipline problems.
    c. referral from alternative sources; i.e., human service agencies or the judicial system.

The delivery of educational services is available 12 months per year and is provided through a cooperative agreement between the Walker/Hackensack/Akeley Public Schools and the Cass Lake\Bena Public Schools. Educational services are provided by the Cass Lake Area Learning Center. The Center serves 40 students in which five are over 21 years old, ten are special education students, and twenty-five fall within the target group for this project. Additionally, 81% of the student population are Native American.

WORK EXPERIENCE COMPONENT

All students enrolled in an alternative education center are provided the opportunity to participate in the work experience component. The work experience component is two tiered.

Tier 1 provides students with three options to explore the opportunity of the world of work. This includes:

1. Enrollment in a traditional vocational class offered by a local school district. Examples include, but are not limited to, building trades, health occupations, and model offices.

2. Enrollment in an area vocational institute.

3. Participation in work experience seminars conducted by coordinators at the local Alternative Education Center.

All three options provide students the opportunity to receive academic credits for vocational studies.

The work experience seminars conducted by the local work experience coordinators focus on job readiness skills. Skills developed include, but are not limited to, personal skill assessment, job search, application preparation, and assistance in preparing for job interviews. Additionally, seminars explore the world of work where students gain insight regarding the demands and rewards associated with various types of jobs.

Tier two provides on the job training experience. These experiences are designed in such a fashion that the participants gain vocational skills training in an industry where there are expectations of job placement. Students receive up to two (2) elective credits for their on the job work training experience.

Job development and work sites support expansion of residential units. Examples include: housing inspectors and carpentry. Additional work sites have been developed with organizations who provide housing for the homeless and very low-income. Those organizations include: Bemidji Area Housing Authority, Beltrami County Housing Authority, Cass County Housing Authority, Red Lake and Leech Lake Housing Programs, local Community Development Corporations, Mahube Community Action Council, the House of Hospitality and the Evergreen House. All organizations participating with the project have assured that the work projects meet the objectives of the plan, provide a meaningful work experience, and adhere to all federal and state regulations regarding youth training projects.

STATUS OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

BI-CAP, INC. Program

BI-CAP, INC. Youth Employment and Training project capacity is 14 and is geared toward students in the 16 to 19 age range.

Number of students who participated in the program	32
Number of students who graduated or received a GED	3
Number of students in process of receiving a GED	14
Number of students who left for other employment	4
Number of students who left the program (moved from the area, found other employment)	22
Number of homes completed (4 transitional homes) helped Habitat for Humanity construct 1 house	5

The CITY, INC. Program

The City, Inc. youth employment and training project began six weeks after the start of the school year. The project capacity is six students. The City, Inc. would like to introduce 30 at-risk youth to training and employment opportunities. The project operates on a hexmester system (6 weeks) allowing students to re-enroll in the training project based upon their interest level.

The number of students who have participated in The CITY, INC program this year is 10. Five participants re-enrolled for a second six weeks.

The participants include 9 males and 1 female, of which 7 are American Indian, 2 European American and 1 Asian American.

Number of students to earn 4 academic credits	5
Number of students to earn 4 work experience credits	5
Number of students to earn 1 credit in job seeking/job keeping skills as rated by the employment coordinator	6
Number of homes completed for low-income and the homeless	2

The Youth Employment and Housing funds have assisted program participants in acquiring academic credits, work experience and job readiness skills. Some changes detected in program participants are: the emergence of leadership qualities, willingness to learn from one another, enthusiasm is high, increased confidence and positive attitude and work behaviors.

The organizations implementing the Youth Employment and Housing program address other aspects for the "Targeted Youth". The organizations provided a self-sufficiency counselor to assist students in identifying and meeting their social service needs as well as, clothing for the work site, transportation, tutorial services, work stipend, food and health care.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS

Require grantees to develop school/business partnerships which meet the needs of the local business and enhance the educational development of youth in work readiness.

Require grantees to develop relationships with local jurisdictions, townships, cities and counties to provide meaningful work opportunities for students identified as at-risk of not completing high school.

Youth employment and training programs should be an integral part of youth correctional programming.

Incorporate skill training, work opportunities and after care services to other at-risk youth.

Develop work opportunities for youth in local businesses where mentoring of youth and the prospect of future employment upon high school completion is deemed more important than a work stipend. (modeled after Minneapolis Youth Trust)

Develop relationships with local building trades persons, so that at-risk youth may volunteer their services to acquire work skills.

Explore the feasibility of having all contracts with public bodies for renovation of foreclosed HUD homes written to require training of at-risk students from the local area. Students can be selected from schools and correctional facilities.

Education could be geared more toward independent living skills with traditional education provided as an option.

Reguire grantees to develop collaborations/networks with organizations which address the homeless and their issues and the training of youth.

The youth employment and housing program should remain at the State Planning Agency to be coordinated with other at-risk programs. The agency should be given funding flexibility to support the development of local consortiums to address training and employment of at-risk youth and the homeless.